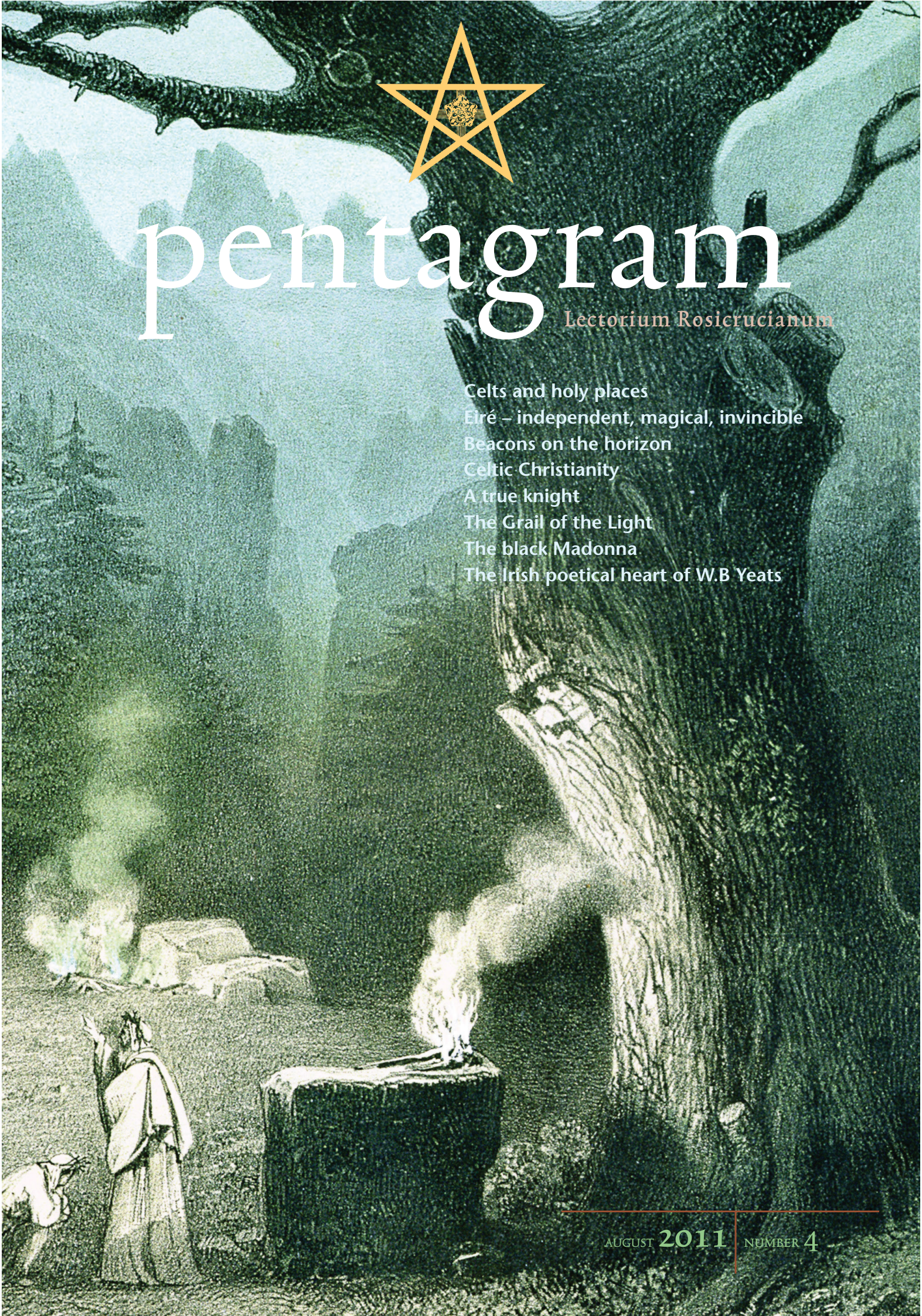


pentagram

Lectorium Rosicrucianum

Celts and holy places
Eiré – independent, magical, invincible
Beacons on the horizon
Celtic Christianity
A true knight
The Grail of the Light
The black Madonna
The Irish poetical heart of W.B Yeats

AUGUST 2011 | NUMBER 4

pentagram

volume 33 number 4 2011

The **Pentagram** no. 4 of this year takes you, the readers, along to the world of the Celts, who inhabited the whole of Europe during the millennia BC, although they did not have a common form of state or government.
Our journey gives an impression of a mysterious region that has sunk deeply back into the mists of time. It is like a painting with many colours and hues, with here and there spots of light, with beautiful areas and interesting excursions into history, obviously without pretending to be exhaustive.

On the following pages, you will find what inspired us. We were particularly struck by the ease with which the liberating insights of the early Christians found resonance with the Celts in France, England and above all in Ireland. It is as Taliesin, the last bard of the fifth century sang:
'Christ and the word of the beginning were our teachers from the outset, and we never forgot their teachings. Christianity may perhaps have been new in Asia, but there has never been a time that the Druids of Brittany did not propagate its teachings.'

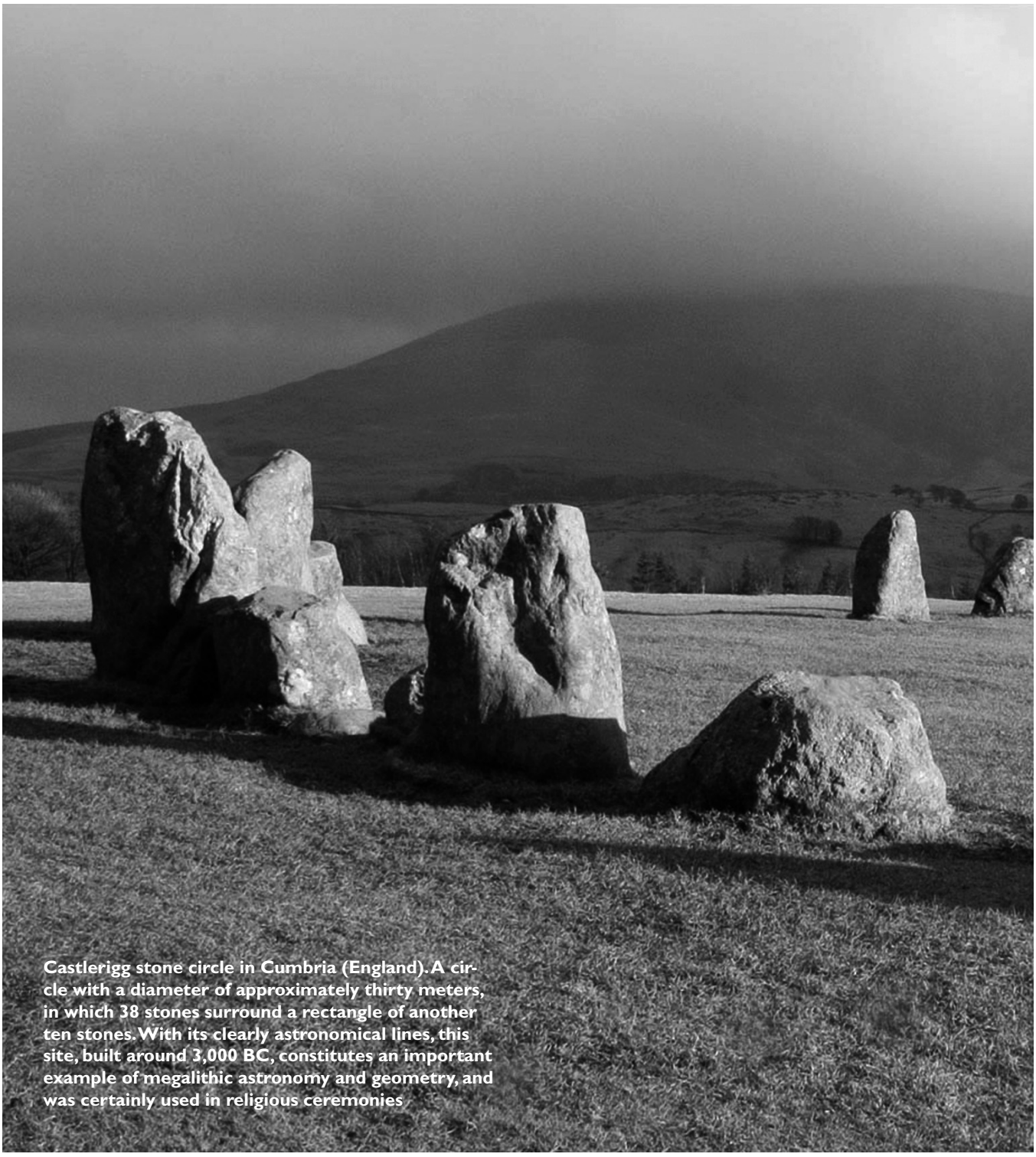
content

heap of stones of the testimony 2
mystery knowledge is timeless 6
the celts and holy places 8
a field that reflects pure values 14
landmarks on the horizon 18
celtic christianity 21
eiré, independent, magical, invincible 26
a true knight 30
johannes scouts, an irish freethinker 37
the grail of the light
the ancient legends of the grail in celtic tradition 42
the poet's irish heart of w.b. yeats 48

Cover: A representation of The Holy forest of the druids. Engraving from the opera Norma by Vincenzo Bellini (1802-1835). French School, 19th century. Bibliothèque de l'Opera Garnier, Paris, France/The Bridgeman Art Library

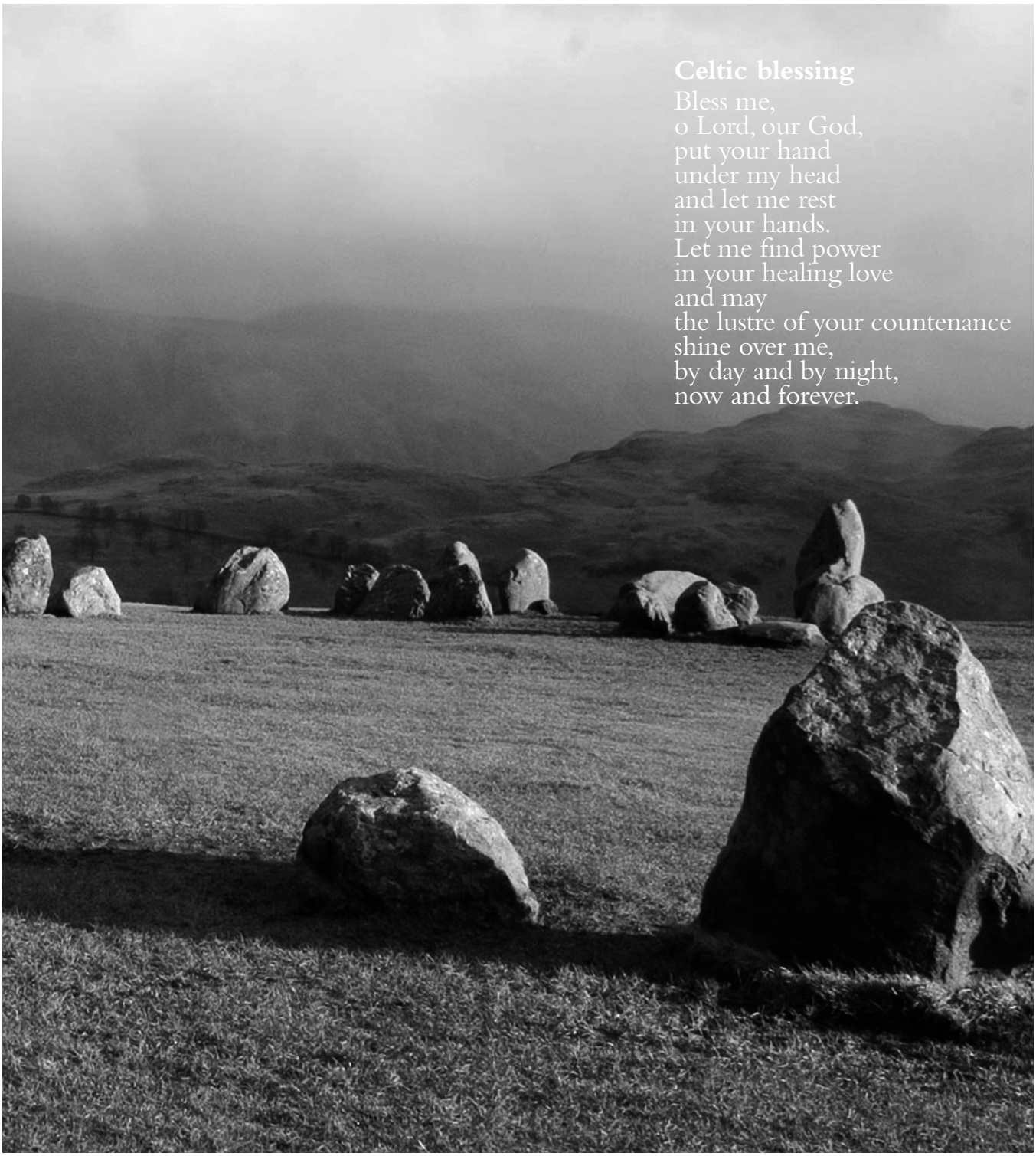
heap of stones of the

A **Pentagram** about the Celts – but the Celts never existed.
A **Pentagram** about Ireland – but there is more than one Ireland.



Castlerigg stone circle in Cumbria (England). A circle with a diameter of approximately thirty meters, in which 38 stones surround a rectangle of another ten stones. With its clearly astronomical lines, this site, built around 3,000 BC, constitutes an important example of megalithic astronomy and geometry, and was certainly used in religious ceremonies.

testimony



Celtic blessing

Bless me,
o Lord, our God,
put your hand
under my head
and let me rest
in your hands.
Let me find power
in your healing love
and may
the lustre of your countenance
shine over me,
by day and by night,
now and forever.

Approximately 11,000 years ago, the new Stone Age began that involved a series of revolutionary developments. Although these developments showed strong regional differences, they had agriculture and cattle breeding in common that were practised for the first time in this period.

'Cimmerians' is the oldest known name of the 'Celtoi', peoples which, according to the Greeks, lived in the vast forests and regions to the north and the west of them. We find them later as Celts in England and Wales, as Gaels in Scotland and as Gauls in Gaul, present-day France.

About 3,000 years BC, all these peoples drifted from their original land beyond the Euphrates to their new habitats in Europe, in Gaul and Belgica, down to the *insulae sacrae*, the mystical islands in the west.

Modern esoteric thought about the peoples from that period also speaks of the so-called 'rest civilisation'. They actually had to start all over again after the centre of their original civilisations had disappeared due to great calamities and the vast knowledge that characterised their origin was lost.

They were peoples, who virtually did not record anything in writing, certainly not religious matters. Nor did they build altars, in which metals or nails were used. They were from the Biblical stone kingdom.

They did not have a coherent form of state, a coordinating government or an economic or political unity. They were autonomous in their own region, but they shared a common religious sentiment and a language. This language was spoken on the whole European continent. Its imaginative power was unsurpassed, and it was a language of which the Irish and the Scots said that it was already spoken in Paradise.

It was the language that ensured that the different peoples time and again found each other. In the language, the common spirit, the habits, customs and rituals were expressed. As tribes, the Celts were autonomous in voluntary cooperation. In their own way, people and tribe maintained a link with the nature spirits and the spiritual hierarchies standing behind them. Every free Celt had a personal link with the divine, as far as his consciousness allowed this. They were related, embedded, in the world soul, not as the thoroughly individualised personalities that we are, but as part of a mysterious whole and as an active factor in it.

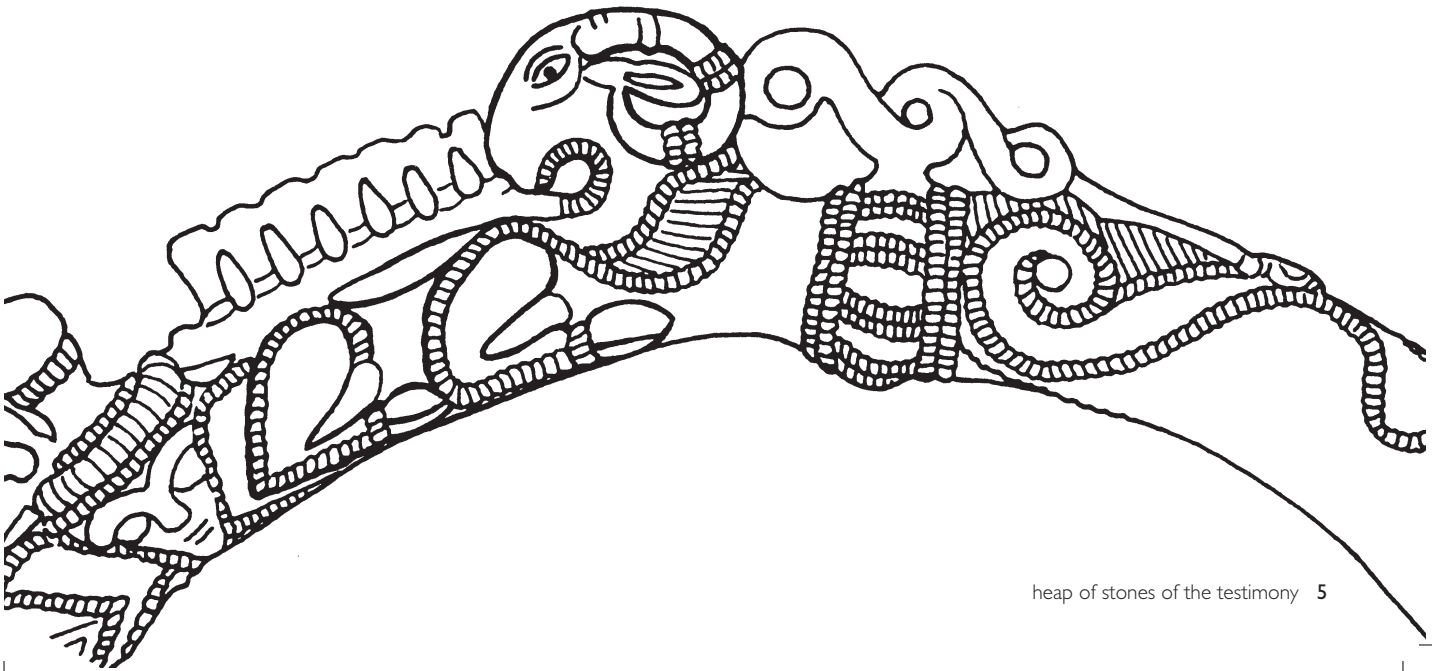
Here and there, a name reminds us of them. The root 'celt' can be found in 'Galatians' in Asia Minor or 'Galicia' in Spain and 'Gaul'. Nowadays, this language has virtually disappeared. It is only here and there that Celtic still resounds in a few surviving languages, particularly at the edges of Europe – Welsh, Scottish and Irish, in Gaelic and Breton. The Germanic name for the Celts was 'Walen'. We can still see this form in the names of regions like Wallis in Switzerland, Wales in Great Britain or

The Celtic people inhabited all regions from 'the ends of the earth' (Cape Finisterre in Spain and the British Isles) to the Black Sea, and from the North Sea to the Mediterranean

Rudolf Steiner in Penmaenwahr, Wales:
'If we ascend the mountain and come across the stones of the Druids, and consider them the memorial stones of a striving for the spirit from those ancient times, we can imagine how the Celtic Druids of the time were yearning for the spirit. And then we see before us that they will not find the fulfilment of their longing, until we gain insight into the spirit again in our time.
[We gain this insight] … by experiencing the coming, inner Christ in our way. Just as Christ first experienced the mystery of Golgotha in a physical figure, he returned in a spiritual figure because this is the only way, in which humanity will recognise him again. This is what we can strongly experience in this place, where these special monuments have been preserved.

R. Steiner, Penmaenmawr, 18-31 August 1923

Wallonia in Belgium. At one of the heights of Celtic civilisation, in the third century BC, the Celtic people inhabited all regions from 'the ends of the earth' (Cape Finisterre in Spain and the British Isles) to the Black Sea, and from the North Sea to the Mediterranean. In 387 BC, the Celts conquered the city of Rome, and thus, not the Romans, but the Celts became the founders of cities like London, Lyon, Geneva, Strasbourg, Bonn, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Coimbra and Ankara. ✪



mystery knowledge is timeless

Peace, love and justice formed the basis of druidism. Wisdom is living from it and approaching the world and humanity on the basis of this sincerity. It is knowledge linked with everything and everyone.

How can something be young that had its peak four thousand years ago? Isn't it said that the great Hu Gadarn re-structured druidism approximately four thousand years ago around Stonehenge, already old at the time! He was a contemporary of Abraham and he was the patriarch of his people: Hu, the mighty one.
Many remnants of this period can be found on the British Isles. On every ten hectares, there is a stone circle, a gallery, an 'orthostat' or upright stone, or a tumulus.
Standing next to them, we feel the riddle, the great question, crop up. We think that they must have been places of healing, and simultaneously places with religious purposes. Here time dissolves. We experience that often important events took place here: 'healing' and 'knowing God' are not separated here.
A druid is an initiate in the mystery knowledge; the word is related to the Indo-European root 'vid', as in the Indian Vedas: 'knowledge'. A druid diligently protected the secrets and transmitted his teachings and wisdom only orally. In everything, he saw the cooperation of 'the three', of the trinity of creation.
We are standing next to a stone circle; no one is with us, only grass and silent stones. Mystery knowledge is timeless. And here it is as if we perceive it again!

'Dis or Duwa (= Thau) is the triune God!

Bel or Beli Mawr is the great, creative Light!
Taran the guardian!
Yesu or Hesus the coming saviour!'

Everything consists of three.
Trinity forms life,
and every existence:
father,
light,
spirit.

Three brilliant qualities of wisdom:
love,
wisdom,
courage.

Three things that stem from the three original unities:
all life,
all good,
all power.

The three foundations of druidism:
peace,
love,
justice.

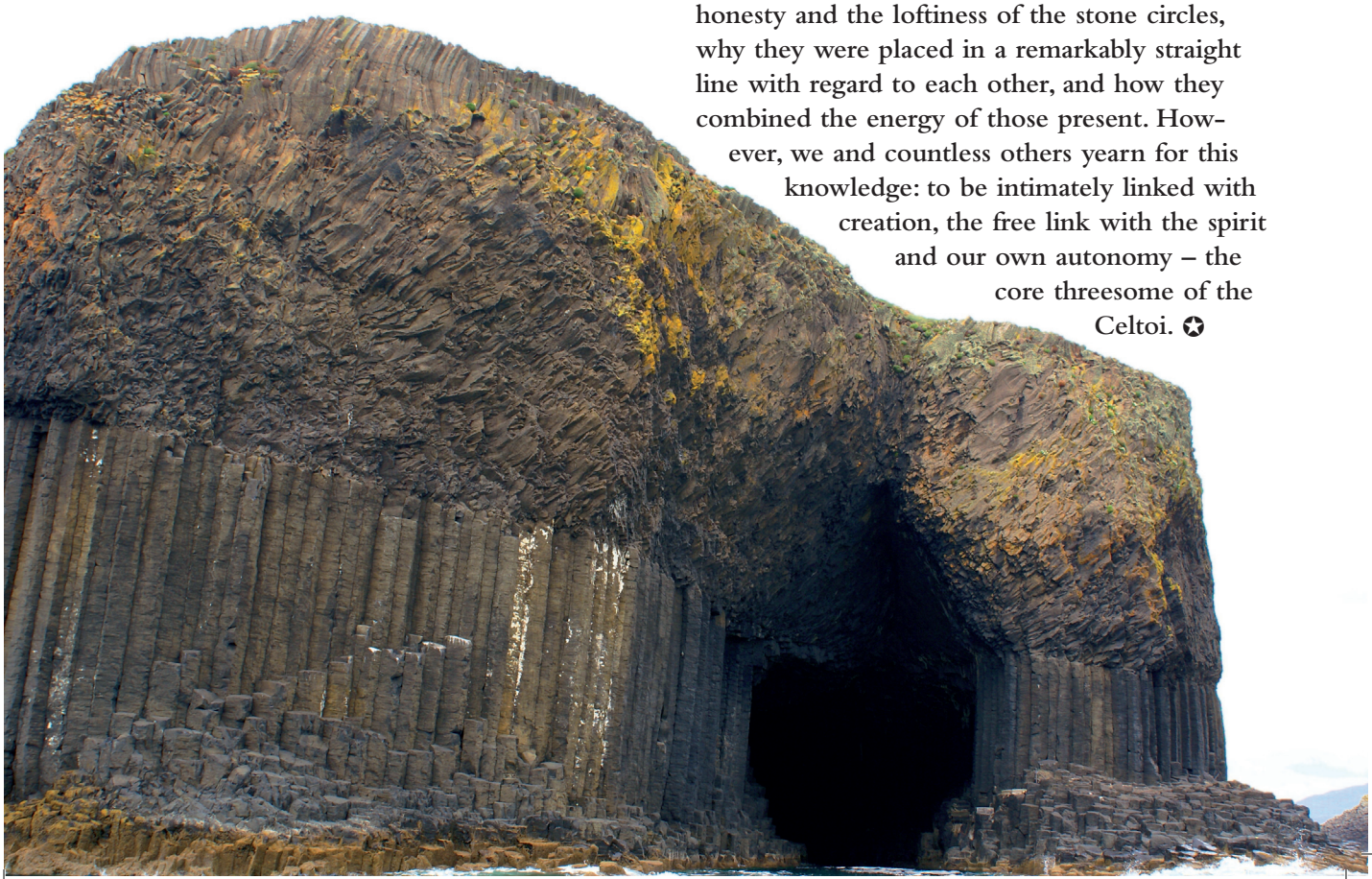
Three praiseworthy things in a human being:
rest,
wisdom,
kindness.

The druids knew an energy of the Light, called Hesus or Yesu. And this very saving aspect was the reason that they wholeheartedly welcomed a

new revelation, in which Jesus Christ approached them as a messenger from the solar world. The oak was the holy tree of the deity and the mistletoe with its three white berries represented the trinity, but particularly Yesu, the Light. He, the Light power, made, after all, the two one, and removed the separation. Undoubtedly, druidism expected the new impulse of the Light: Christ. In the druidic trinity, Hesus is 'the re-creator of the future'. In this way, the arrival of Christianity linked the sun with the mystery of the resurrection.

This concerns a knowledge that has disappeared, but which is still dormant under the surface of our consciousness. Link yourself – as they were linked. Forget time, fear and worry. Hear the first words. It is waiting for you. It slumbers – in order to wake up in many people of the new time. How time weeps now that our thinking no longer knows anything of the austerity, the honesty and the loftiness of the stone circles, why they were placed in a remarkably straight line with regard to each other, and how they combined the energy of those present. However, we and countless others yearn for this knowledge: to be intimately linked with creation, the free link with the spirit and our own autonomy – the core threesome of the Celtoi. ✪

Fingal's Cave is a sea cave on the uninhabited isle of Staffa that belongs to the Hebrides. The cave that is associated with the Celts, has inspired romantic poets and composers, like Mendelssohn who wrote the Hebrides Overture, and William Turner who painted 'Staffa, Fingal's Cave'



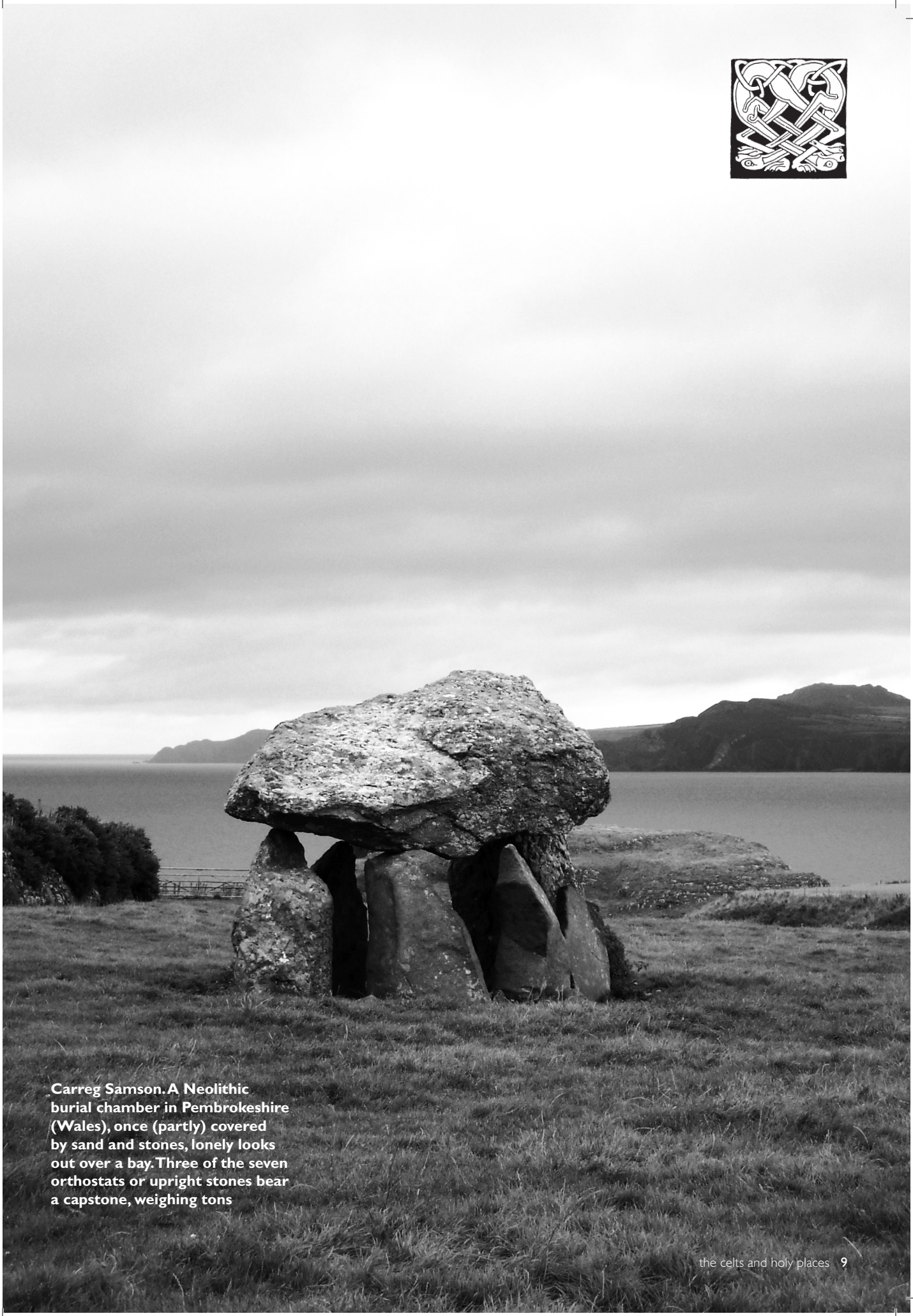
the celts and holy places

Contrary to what many people think, the Celts and the druids neither built temples nor did they know them. The ancient Welsh or Irish stories do not refer to buildings that were used as temples. Greek and Roman sources do not mention Gallic temples that might have existed before the conquest of those regions by Julius Caesar and his armies.

LOCI CONSECRATI
Celtic societies had places where they experienced and worshipped nature, the presence of nature spirits and forces, and lofty gods. They are the so-called holy places or 'loci consecrati', to which some Latin texts refer. For instance, Cassius Dio (164 - around 235 AD), a Roman historian of Greek descent, wrote eighty books about Roman history, in which he extensively dealt with the Celtic revolt under Boudica in the year 64 AD. In his text, he used the word 'nemus', meaning 'an open place (or park) surrounded by trees', which brings us back to the Celts. We also see this word back in the Gallic 'niam' and the Breton word 'nenv'. The Celtic holy places were called 'nemeton'.

After the Gallic wars (around 59 - 53 BC) that Caesar waged, square temples appeared, dedicated to the Roman gods who had, however, nothing in common with the druidic, religious wisdom. In Ireland, which was never occupied by the Romans, no temples have been found. All ceremonies either took place on holy tumuli (mounds) or they were carried out in the forest. By the way, wood was used for building all kinds of structures. The megalithic remnants (dolmen) and the covered stone passages, in which the Irish people situated the abode of the gods, have never been places of worship, if only because of the fact that those hidden and wholly overgrown places were unknown to the people of the time. They testify to another world, to a megalithic civilisation from long before our historiography, from long before the Celts. Modern scholars have gradually become more acquainted with these stone remnants, found spread all over the world.

NEMETON From the word 'nenh' or 'nemus', the concept of 'nemeton' has been derived. According to Lucanus (39-65 AD), the Celtic concept of 'nemeton' is not related to a physical but rather to a symbolic place, with the connotation of 'centre'. This may be a geographical location, but it might just as well be a time or a person, someone who distinguishes himself from the rest of society. The Celts were convinced that it was useless to put the gods in a hut as it were – for this is how they considered the Roman temples. It rather should be the opposite: particularly in freedom, or in the open field, a free person opens himself to the energy of those deities or a deity, so that an interaction develops. Filled with awe, the Celtic person experienced the spiritual reality, driving behind nature. Then the nemeton becomes both the place and the time where this holy encounter, which is like an outpouring (or inflow) of energy, occurs. Wellsprings and their environment, too, were places where contact with Nem (heaven) was able to develop and vital energies from the earth or the cosmos were assimilated in a concentrated form. A well-known place was the source of Barenton (Bel-enton), Norman-



Carreg Samson. A Neolithic burial chamber in Pembrokeshire (Wales), once (partly) covered by sand and stones, lonely looks out over a bay. Three of the seven orthostats or upright stones bear a capstone, weighing tons

The altar in the druidic circle was called 'cromlech', stone of worship, and a hollow stone served as a basin for untouched, 'holy' rainwater

dy. Bel, Belenos or Beli Mawr was the Celtic god of the radiant light, of the fire of the sun, of purification. Therefore, such a source is a holy, open place of the Light, of healing, of Bel.

However, it is – and this is very important – the people who determine the place, guided by their intuition. A nemeton is always topical and is never found automatically. It is self-evident that the druids, the people who were able to link their vast knowledge of nature and of the forces of heaven with their intuition, always carefully selected such places! In this context, seeking a refuge from the Romans, as is sometimes suggested, did not play any role.

DESERT – DYSERT The same is true with regard to the concept of 'desert' that occupied a special place with the first, original Christians. From the moment that the message of the gospel was introduced, we see in the Greek and Roman towns that certain (philosophical or religious) circles were inclined to turn away from nature. However, the early Christians felt a great need for the simple interaction with natural life, because they were better able to experience the unity of creation in that way. This is why they went 'into the desert' – an area where human activities were not dominant and where they returned to the simplicity of nature. This was what the first Christian hermits were seeking.
When the mediaeval monks founded their monasteries in places of tranquillity, though in the vicinity of human settlements, they imitated the example of the Breton and British hermits, who had already been seeking such places since the first century. In this way, they followed in the footsteps of the druids, who had, after all, never abandoned their link with nature. In Ireland, we find the word 'dysert' (the word means 'abandoned', but also 'desert') in the names of some monasteries.

The places of assembly of the druids were circular. They were always open from above and from the sides; by their form, they symbolised the dome of the sky. Metal – weapons – were not taken inside the circle. The altar in the druidic circle was called 'cromlech' (stone of worship) and a hollow stone, placed next to it, served as a basin for untouched, 'holy' water that was collected directly from the rain clouds. No druidic worship could be performed before sunrise or after sunset. The round form of the places also symbolised the

eternal cycle of nature and even the access roads, which formed a network throughout the whole country, had a symbolic function.

CELTIC ACADEMIES Diodoros of Sicily (90-21 BC) wrote a world history, consisting of forty books, in which, among other things, he mentioned: 'Amongst the Gauls and Britons, there are highly revered philosophers and theologians, called 'druids'. They are the guardians of an extensive knowledge of all sciences of that time.'
During the centuries BC, the British Isles had tens of druidic 'universities' that accommodated large numbers of students. Religion as well as the administration of justice and science were in the hands of this very advanced group. In order to acquaint oneself with the druidic wisdom along with everything belonging to it, twenty years were needed on the average – as well as a strong, healthy etheric body that was able to ensure a perfect memory! Moreover, it is shown by Greek and Roman sources that the nobility and the wealthy from Athens and Rome sent their children there to study law, science and religion.
Plato said that important parts of Greek philosophy stemmed from the West. Although many of the ancient Greek and Roman authors did not understand the druidic teachings, their texts demonstrate that they had only praise for their knowledge and wisdom. They related the druidic knowledge to the Pythagorean teachings. There are authors from antiquity who departed from the idea that Pythagoras was taught by the druids. There is reason to assume that Musaeus, Orpheus and Pythagoras belonged to the priesthood of that time, to which the druids also belonged.

THE TEACHINGS OF THE TRINITY Julius Caesar tells us: 'To the druids, the immortality of the soul forms the basis of their teachings. They consider it their main motive for conducting a virtuous life.'
The core of druidism was the unity of the deity and this unity was the trinity. Procopius of Caesarea (530 AD) said: 'Hesus, Taran and Bel were the names of one deity; all druids recognise only one god.' They knew the so-called 'great mystery' that was passed on orally from one generation to the next: the teachings of the trinity.
To clarify this principle, which was at the same time the basic idea of the triads, the druids often used a tree. They selected an oak tree with two branches that grew virtually horizontally from the trunk, roughly in the form of a cross. In the right branch, they carved the name of Hesus (or Yesu, 'power'), in the trunk Taranis (wisdom) and in the left branch Belenis, which means Light and also love. Above this, they carved the name of the deity: Tan or Thau. Ages before the coming of Christ, a Celtic triad already existed:
'Lift up your heads, and open your eternal doors, you gates,
and the king of glory will enter.

The famous cauldron of Gundstrup, found in Denmark, shows Celtic ritual images, but was actually made in Thrace. The cauldron was purportedly ordered for Celtic Scodisci, a tribe that invaded the middle-lower Danube region in 120 BC

Who is this king of glory? Yesu – the mighty one, he is the king of glory.'

The druids taught the young people. Caesar said about this: 'Young people come in large numbers to learn from them and they are highly revered. Many come of their own accord, but also many are sent by their families.' The word 'druid' is not related to the Greek name for oak, as Pliny the Elder stated. It stems from the ancient 'dru-wide', from the Latin 'videre' and the Greek 'idein', 'to see'. The literal meaning of druids is: 'they who see far' or 'they who know much', but the Indo-European root 'wid' is closely related to the Gallic word 'vidu', tree.
In Celtic, there is a relationship between the word 'to know' and the word for forest. The relationship between knowing on the one hand, and religious-magical experiencing in connection with the venerable, old forest trees on the other, is not so strange, especially if we think of the tree of knowledge, which is found in the traditions of all peoples. The druids were knowledgeable people and at the same time, men of the trees, people who

In the year 43, emperor Claudius ordered his troops to invade Brittany and to raze the druidic universities to the ground

knew nature and were healers, people who taught and performed their rituals in holy, open places.

THE POWER OF THE MEMORY According to Caesar, they thought about the stars and their movements, the dimensions of the world and of the land, about the nature of things, the power of the gods, and it was these memories that they passed on to the youth. This instruction could only take place by word of mouth, because the druids had two good reasons to distrust writing. On the one hand, they did not want their teachings to become public and on the other hand, they wanted to prevent their students from believing that they knew something – because they were able to write it down! – while neglecting their memory. This is an additional explanation for the long time needed for their studies. The main reason was, we can well imagine, that a young person should to a certain extent be a man, autonomous, free and mature, to be able to proclaim this wisdom.
A druid explained to the Greek philosopher Lucianus of Samosata: 'We do not link eloquence with Hermes, as you do, but with the mighty Hercules... We believe that Hercules was a sage who was able to do everything he did through the power of his eloquence, and who overcame all impediments through the power of his conviction. In my opinion, his fast arrows were nothing else than his words: sharp-pointed and well-directed to inflict harm to the (wrong ideas of the) soul; as you say yourselves: winged words.'
In the year 43, emperor Claudius ordered his troops to invade Brittany and to raze the druidic universities to the ground. Institutions and libraries were to be destroyed and he proposed to the Roman senate to impose the death penalty on professing the druidic religion. Subsequently, 'many fled to the harbours to go to another country, looking for freedom.'

Ultimately, the Roman empire and the Roman church would wholly undermine the influence of the druids and make it disappear utterly. However, before this could happen, a remarkable fusion occurred between druidism, that was purely oriented towards the Light, and pure Christianity, that had already reached the West via an intact line, by the year 50. ✪

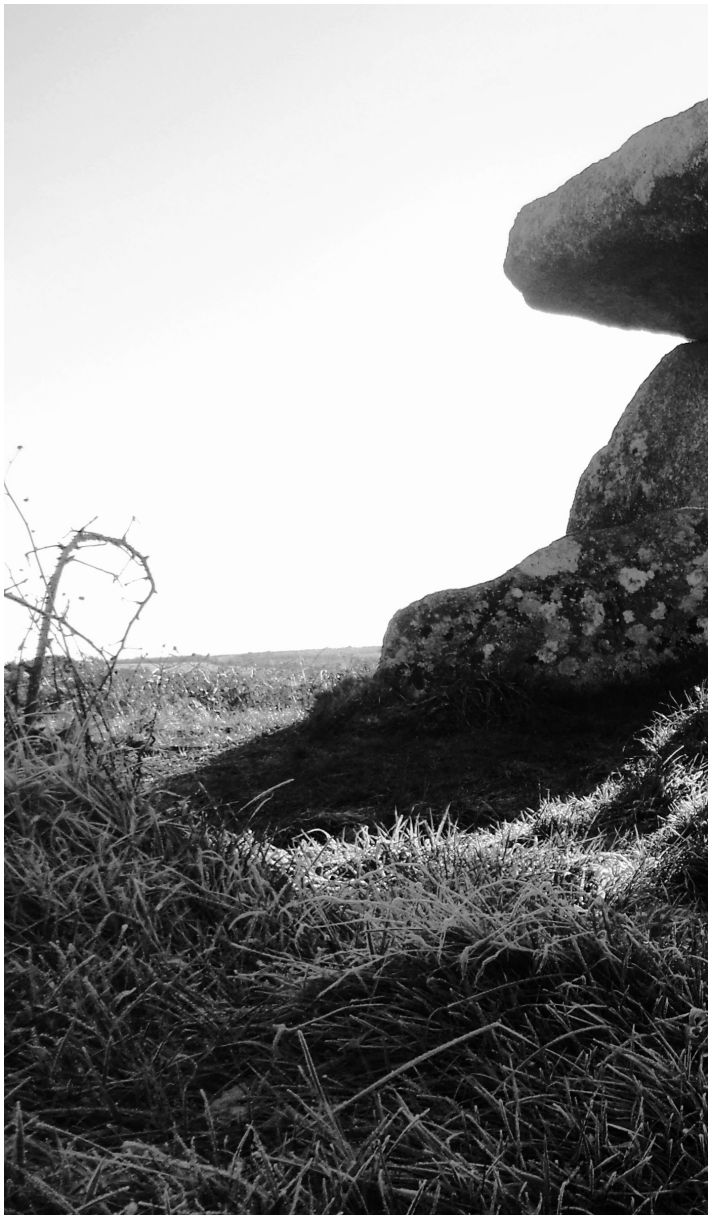
a field that reflects **pure values**

Each nation has its sanctuaries, often erected on so-called holy places like, amongst other things, the nodes of earth rays. Literature about Celts and druids in general and about Ireland in particular contains a wealth of references to those remarkable places. But what exactly is a sanctuary?

'I felt the breath of strange worlds stroke my face.'

Ella Young, Celtic Wonder Tales

What makes a place a sanctuary? The word sanctuary itself explains this. 'Holy' means: whole, complete, perfect, and hence we use words like healing. A surgeon is a healer.
In Dutch, the word 'sanctuary' is related to the word house, although in its most abstract form, as far as the concept of form can be utilised.
In a number of Western European languages (Dutch, German, Swedish, Danish and Norwegian), the word 'mankind' refers to all aspects, properties and characteristics that evoke the immaterial concept of 'man' in our consciousness. This word refers to a unity, a collective. The opposite of this unity is implied in the word 'kingdom', referring to a multitude. Minerals, animals and plants form a kingdom, with a great diversity in each of them, the number of which does not mean anything to



Lanyon Quoit or Table of the Giants, in Cornwall. Nowadays it is thought that the Celts did not wholly cover their megalithic monuments with sand, but left the granite capstone and the jambs uncovered to serve as background during ritual ceremonies

Blessing of a midwife
(Celtic prayer)

A drop of heaven,
a drop of the land,
a drop of the sea
on your forehead, my love.

To protect you,
to guard you
and to surround you.
The drop of the Three.
To fill you with grace.

A sanctuary is a place where the union is sought, the restoration of the three-in-one

powers, to form a reflection of the one man. There, an unearthly space may be created, a special place or field, separated from the personality, separated from the physical place of assembly, down to 'in the world, but not of the world'. In this way, this house becomes a home. A house is static; a home is activity, life, movement. Spirit seeks the re-union with the healing spirit. The classical Rosicrucians from the seventeenth century called this building 'the House Sancti Spiritus'. The modern Rosycross refers to it as 'the Living Body'. There is no dead matter. The earthly building, in which this sanctifying, healing work is systematically carried out, and that is kept as pure as possible to this end, will stone-by-stone inhale this atmosphere and also emanate it again.

SPIRIT OF TRUTH In this way, a house, built by human hands, becomes a 'sanctuary', to the extent that we do not understand it in a material sense. Thus the concept of 'Christianity' can never refer to an organisation or a doctrine, let alone to a series of dogmas, but refers to a field in which the pure values of the Supernature are reflected and preserved. How many Christians would there really be? However, as above, so below: this irradiation by the Light takes shape in an order, in which the spirit of truth can be lived. This form wholly serves the work of salvation that is accomplished in it and may be an open place, a hut or a basilica. Celtic culture had a special relationship with trees, which perfectly fitted into its vision of nature and man. As we cannot say of a human being that he is an animal, we can no longer say of a tree that it is a plant; both have surpassed their general earthly form. To the druids, the oaks and other trees in a forest were symbols similar to what the pillars of a cathedral were for the mediaeval person.

Stone or wood, marble or sand alone do not build true temples and cathedrals. Only the harmony of human hands, human heads and human hearts working together build beacons of light, regardless of the cultural framework, provided they form a home for the spirit of truth. Where people have assembled in the name of the Light, an inexhaustible wellspring of help and comfort springs up for those who seek the Light.
A sanctuary is a place where the union is sought of the energy of the Gnosis, man and world, of spirit, soul and body, the restoration of the three-in-one. Each human being bears a sanctuary in his heart; in every human being – however ignorant – the spark of the eternal fire slumbers, usually still hardly perceptible through the veils that the material world has woven around it. Yet, it is a Light that is never extinguished, because it arises from the eternal flame of love. ✪

landmarks on the horizon

The great stone structures from the new Stone Age testify to an impressive geometrical knowledge. The builders measured and spoke with their heart, with one unit of measurement and with one language.

The builders of the great stone structures from the period that we call the new Stone Age, which began approximately 11,000 years ago, had an entirely different consciousness than ours and their knowledge was of a wholly different nature. They would be unable to compete with our rational knowledge and with the large amount of information that we now have at our disposal. This would have outweighed their 'knowledge of the heart', their link with creation and the wisdom of their intuition, with which they approached life and their fellow human beings.

They did not know a division between art and science, between religion and philosophy, and between astronomy and astrosophy. They were nevertheless able to erect incredible constructions and they had an impressive geometrical knowledge at their disposal. They carefully followed the course of the celestial bodies and acknowledged the importance of the changing of the seasons. They were aware of the coherence between the human 'small world' and the macrocosm in the great world of the universe. For them, the energy flows in the human body did not hold any secrets. To them, the energy flows or lay lines, drawn over the earth, along which they erected their edifices (astronomical observation points? concentration points of energy? places of healing? religious constructions? assembly points of knowledge?), were just as normal as a route planner is to us. The precision with which these nodes correspond to the positions and movements of the celestial bodies through time, leave us astonished; here, we find evidence that countless people in ancient societies lived on the basis of 'as above, so below'.

Scholars assume that there was a single global language that was spoken until 15,000 years ago, just as people also measured and built on the basis of the megalithic yard as the unit of measurement. Language was holy, typical of what was divine; the word possessed power and was used very carefully. Nothing was written down, because everything was known. Only those who possessed knowledge, ruled the people; he who was king was knowledgeable, learned, connected. These groups determined where people could settle; they were the ones who had the knowledge of building and architecture – all kinds of knowledge were represented in them.

Plato wrote in his Critias:

'For many generations, as long as the divine nature lasted in them, they were obedient to the laws, and well-affectioned towards the god, whose seed they were; for they possessed true and in every way great spirits, uniting gentleness with wisdom in the various chances of life, and in their intercourse with one another.'

Scholars say that everything seems to indicate that before the Flood of approximately 11,000 BC (Plato estimated the destruction of the island of Atlantis around that time), the earth had a high megalithic civilisation. We still discover

The fascinating fort Dun Aengus, a remnant from the Celtic Iron Age (around 500-100 BC), looks out over the sea on the rocks of Innishmore, an island on the Irish west coast.

How would we ever be able to forget the Irish isle, whence the lustre of such a great light and the sun of the faith have risen for us?

Abbot Grimold of St. Gallen (around 860 AD)

It was in Ireland that, during the first centuries of our era, without any outside interference, the very special marriage was achieved between the ancient wisdom of the mysteries and the new impulses of inner Christianity. It is a mistake to think that the original, more matriarchal and holistic culture of the Celts was roughly destroyed by the masculine, authoritarian culture of the Christians. This might be true for the restoration movement, imposed by Rome in the sixth century, but this certainly did not apply to the early Celtic Christianity of the first centuries of our era – which was a purely Irish product.

The truth is rather that in Ireland, the new, Christian message was immediately recognised by the representatives of the ancient mysteries. Subsequently, a young, spiritual movement, propelled by the new impulse of the Light of Christ, received its decisive contours on the basis of this ancient wisdom. In this way, Irish Christianity was, in no time, able to flourish and spread liberation far beyond its borders, during a gradual, peaceful process that never renounced the identity of the Irish attitude to life.

TRADE NETWORK From more than one direction (see elsewhere in this issue), the events in Palestine around Jesus' crucifixion were known amongst the druids. This was enabled by the many trade relations between Wales, Ireland and the Roman towns on the Mediterranean, as well as the many visitors who, in antiquity, visited the centres of druidism in Britain. Transmitted writings described the two major druidic teachings of eternity and the unassailability of the universe. Their laws were called 'heavenly judgements'; these were always passed on orally, but were even-

They knew the course of the stars and the influences of the cosmos; they were attuned to the changing of the seasons. Their contact with supernatural life was expressed in the worship of holy places, places of freedom, where only pure power circulated. There were special open places in the extensive forests, near confluent streams, in special places on the borders of a river, but also near ancient dolmen and menhirs, where they built with wood: open, wooden constructions.
In this context, they themselves possessed a sensitive intuition, a remnant from the ancient human power of clairvoyance, with which they were able to perceive and interact directly with the surrounding nature forces. We can see clues of this in their skull tonsure and the long neck hair that represented this connection.

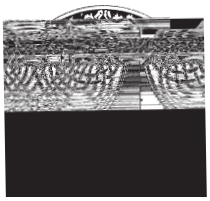
NEW, DIFFERENT COURAGE However, gradually, these powers dwindled and the Celts lost their old habits. The required courage and willingness to sacrifice began to arise from a wholly different nature. Fear would be overcome by devoutness, detachment and devotion. It would be based on the direct, immediate experiencing of divine being, no longer limited to nature, but also to be found within their own self, while everyone would personally be able to walk the path through the mysteries.
Their deeply felt adoration of the sun as the image of God's countenance confronted them with the encounter with Christ as the solar king, the central planetary spirit. In this mystery, the druids recognised the victory of the light over the darkness, which was formerly celebrated at midwinter. The druids have always opposed the idea that they should serve the Light of the sun as a revenging, bloodthirsty deity. The only sacrifice that was asked was that of the self, in struggle, if necessary in military discipline, to learn this attitude. What mattered from then on was a new energy: love. Imitating the son of God, one should now sacrifi

tion through the new spiritual forces occurred spontaneously – because it was understood. In accordance with their independent nature and their loyalty to traditions, the Irish leaders of the people developed a unique combination of the new faith and their ancient paths of initiation. Because the Irish were never dominated by the Romans, and their own worship predicted the coming of a bearer of the Light, they naturally and soon accepted Christianity.

PATRICK Just as Augustine, before becoming a 'church father', was first instructed by the Manichaeans, Patrick was trained by the druids. He came from the British Isles and was captured by the Gaels. As the slave of a druid, he seems to have learned a great deal of the teachings and magic of the druids. He converted to Christianity and considered it his task to convert the Gaels. In this role, he baptised and ordained priests. It was particularly the striking correspondences between the new Christianity and Celtic druidism that enabled him to herald the second stage of Christianisation in Ireland. At least, this is as far as the information of the Christian monks is concerned, stemming from the first sources from the fifth century, when Patrick travelled around as a missionary from Rome. This was a quite different Christianity than the liberating impulse that reached the insulae sacrae during the first century!
This is why the church upholds the image of a Christianisation for which Patrick had laid the foundation. Two hundred years after his death, he was introduced as the founder of Christianity – although he can only symbolise another kind of Christianity that had brought Ireland under the influence of Rome since the eighth century. However, it is obvious that his militant fight against the 'pagan' customs fits much better in the historiography of the conquerors. However, in the fire of his zeal, the Celtic heritage of the druids and the druidic wisdom disappeared. In his time, more than 180 books about the fortunes of the druids

and referred exclusively to lower classes of priests, a kind of shamanists, who were usually occupied with sorcery. Initially, bards, folk poets or folk singers were also members of the priesthood. In Gaul and Wales, the bards played a role as troubadours in Christian society until the end of the Middle Ages.

TEACHINGS However, because of the many names of the different categories and their functions within the class of druids, we should not forget the most important meaning of the word 'druid' – 'he who possesses wisdom and knowledge'. Gradually, the meaning of the word disappeared from the consciousness of the Celtic peoples; in Brittany, it wholly disappeared, certainly after the Christianisation, and was replaced by 'wizard' or 'sorcerer'.
For those who were to a certain extent able to understand the inner teachings, the druids established oases of tranquillity and knowledge, while they who were not yet ready were guided on their path of experience, on which they were offered moral values of courage, bravery and responsibility.
The teachings of the druids, the triads, were very profound, and contain many universal elements. Some recognise Vedic knowledge or knowledge from the Orient, in them. We clearly see a direct influence from Egypt and Syria. It is, therefore, not surprising that Irish monasticism strongly resembled the spirituality of the Oriental desert fathers; there were contacts back and forth. In this context, one of the first great theologians, Pelagius, travelled to Palestine and North Africa, and came into contact with the gnosis of Alexandria. And Caesar said about them: 'The druids consider the immortality of the soul the basis of their teachings. They teach that the souls do not disappear, but move from one body to the

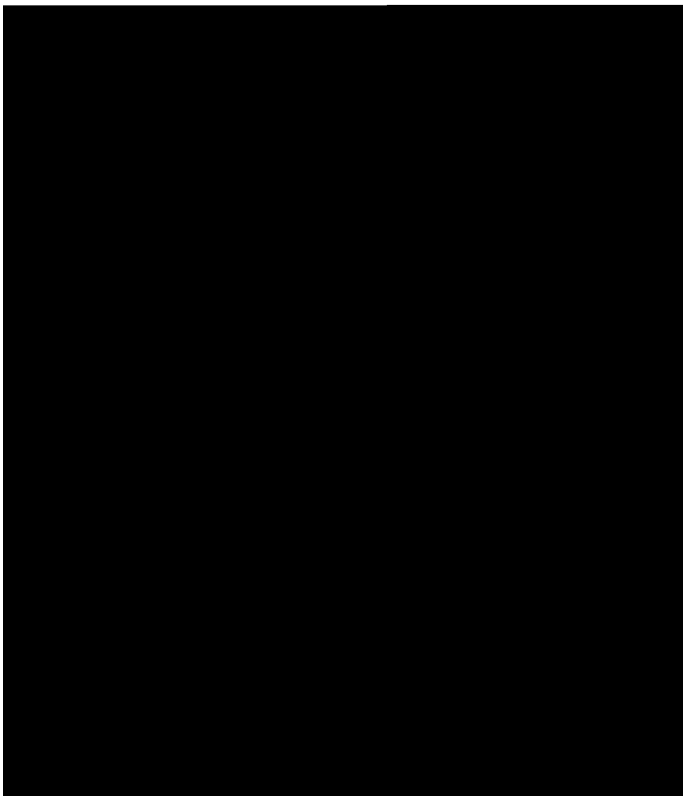


The Last Supper. Illustration from a mediaeval manuscript, made in Edessa (Syria, current Turkey). Here was the cradle and the first centre of Aramaic Christianity

A new impulse irradiated the world with the ancient teachings of the liberation of the divine element in the human being

bears the beautiful mistletoe, which emanates a special fascination, the druids gave the Celts – unspoilt, though rough – a special, mysterious character. The appearance of the druids goes back to a much older sun cult that is sometimes referred to as that of the 'proto-druids'. In this context, the Greek historian Diodorus of Sicily (1st century AD) spoke of a sun cult on an island in the north. And Pliny wrote: '... their land is open to the sun and has a pleasant temperature without too much wind. The inhabitants live in forests and caves, where they worship their gods undisturbed, and live in communities: they know neither war nor illness.'
Aristeas, a priest of Apollo, described Hyperborea as 'a legendary country where people live in peace, follow a vegetarian diet, and are happy and courageous.' In this context, it is interesting that Apollo, according to Herodotus, was worshipped as 'the sun god coming from the winter land Hibernia'. There, Mount Meru was purportedly located, where this and the other world meet, the centre of the world!

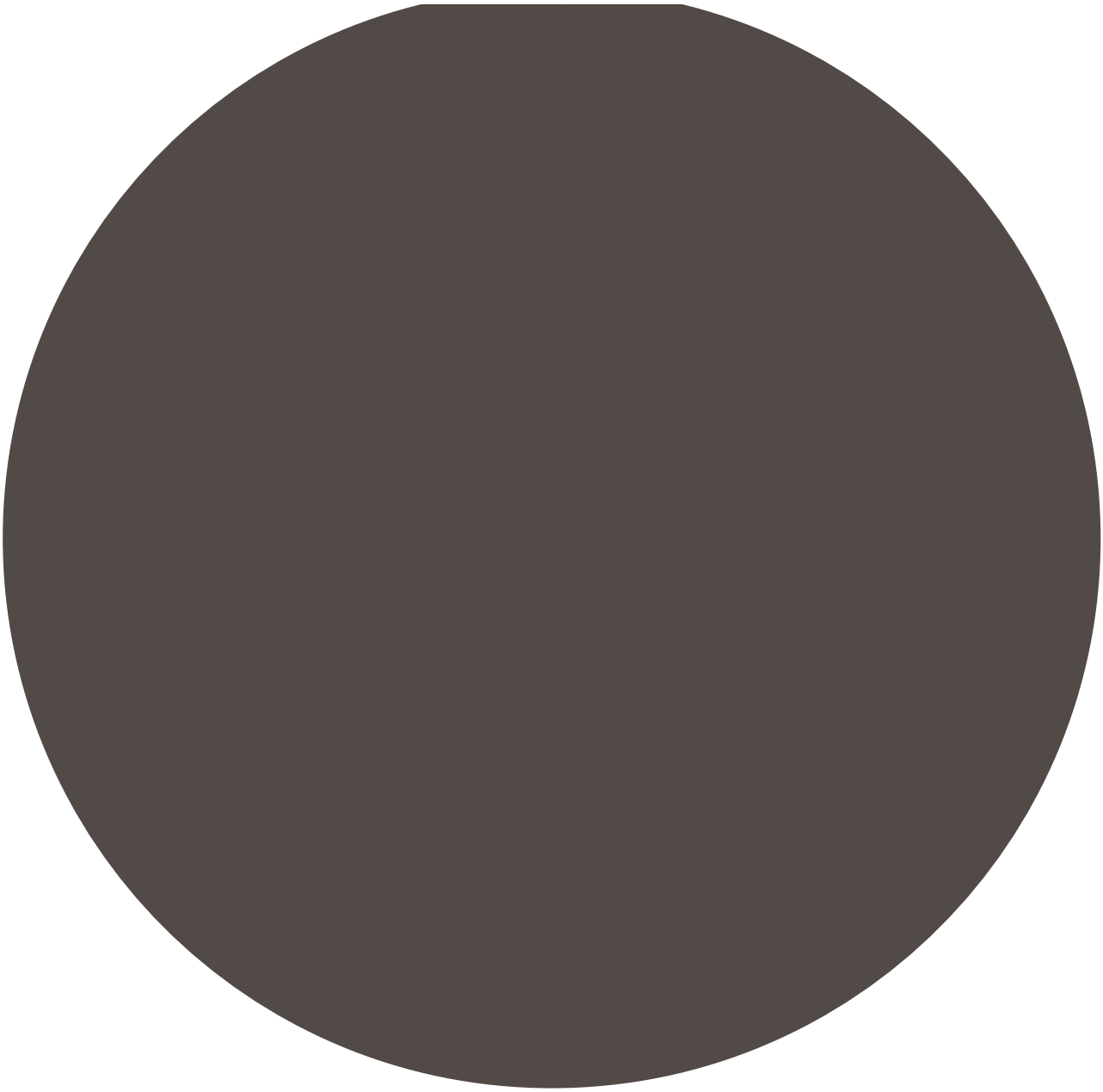
EXPECTATION On this magical island, Eiré, that is Britain and Ireland, druidism flourished for a number of reasons considerably longer than elsewhere in Europe and seamlessly transformed into original Christianity that reached Ireland quite early. It is hard to explain the rapid spread of this new religion other than by the help and support of the druids. After all, they had expected Yesu and Christ as the Light of the world that, coming from the spiritual sun, linked the earth with the divine principle in the cosmos again, and earthly man with his divine prototype. Tertullian spoke of 'a people, not conquered by the Romans, but nevertheless subjected to Christ'. The English historian Gildas wrote in 360 AD about 'an island far from the world and the visible sun that had received the rays of light,



Mistletoe or Viscum album

Blessed'. Bran and his son Caradoc, embracing the new religion of the Light, were baptised and declared their whole kingdom a Christian region. One of the Harleian manuscripts says: 'Christianity has begun in Britain with Bran and Caradoc, before the year 50 AD.' The result was that Cornwall and Wales, which were known as Siluria at the time, formed the first Christian kingdom in the world.

Powerful Rome from the first century of our era bowed to Claudius' decree to extinguish any Christianity and druidism in Britain. However, even four successive generals were unable to do so! And during a six-month truce, Caradoc was invited to come to Rome for negotiations. Caradoc's sister married the Roman general Plautius and stayed in Rome, while Caradoc's father Bran and his grandfather Llyr, likewise remained in Rome, although only after initially having been taken hostage. A few years after his return to the 'islands of tin', he was defeated after having been betrayed. The Romans paraded Caradoc in triumph through Rome and Rome shuddered for the never-before defeated Celtic British.
However, in an unprecedented act of benevolence, as Tacitus expressed it in his Annals, Claudius showed mercy allowing them to live. They spent the seven years of their exile in a house that is still known as the 'British palace'. There they received many refugees from Judea. They were the first and most important people to affirm the liberating religion of Jesus the Lord. By their high-minded mode of life, they kindled the great longing for the new life in Christ's solar sphere in the hearts of thousands of seekers of antiquity. When they returned, around 58 AD, Linus and Clau



A Celtic phalera or breastplate for a warrior, to be considered a precursor of our medals. This object stems from about 100 BC and was discovered in Manerbio sul Mella in North Italy

He who possesses such a stone and is its king may certainly be considered invincible, but Amfortas, the Grail king (whom we may see as the exalted human being, as the original, human prototype) suffers and no medicine, no herb and no 'stellar remedy' is able to cure him. Only a question, asked out of love, at the right place and at the right hour, is able to stem the impurity, the thrust of the pagan spear and the loss of creative power, because this is what the king suffers from.
Now the question crops up: 'Why must the Grail king suffer?' The mystery is this: the eternal originates from Isis, the living one, that is, the mater, the son, the power, the genesis. It is the Spirit, God, the Ineffable One, who created the original worlds and the original manas. And here, in our world of experience, we accept this life as a matter of course, live it, use it, consume it, taking it for granted, and without feeling any responsibility, we abuse it, even destroy it. Precisely because of this death, this dying of the Light, Amfortas suffers. He is no longer able to bring forth, to create, and only an innocent young person like Parcival who, like John, prepares the way for those coming after him, is able to save him, by asking the question.

NEW VIRTUES Ultimately, the mystery of the Grail is the mystery of the blood – and of the transfiguration of the blood. New virtues, the properties of the spirit-soul human being, are released through which the nourishment of the Grail is assimilated. Then a wholly different being of a higher spiritual origin will change his life and give it colour, lustre and meaning.
The legend says: 'It is Parcival who, innocent though haughty – a peculiar paradox – sets

In the ancient Celtic myths and sagas, a magical cauldron or cup often plays an important role. The Celts firmly believed that it was of a divine descent, because the gods mixed the creative and life-giving elements in it. If a mortal human being drank from it, he partook of liberating knowledge and was transformed from a mortal into an immortal being. The Finnish Kalevala, too, sings of the sampo (chalice, shield or world column), and we also encounter it as the mixing vessel (Greek: crater) with Plato and Hermes. In the Vedic tradition, we see it reappear as the source of the soma, the food of immortality. It is a mixing vessel, the inexhaustible content of which is only intended for initiates because, the Celtic stories say, food for cowards cannot be cooked in it. This is what can be read in the song Preiddeu Annwfn (The Prey of Annwfn), a story in the book of the bard Taliesin. The special mixing vessel possesses both a life-giving and life-destroying effect, because in the wrong hands, it does not bring a blessing but rather disaster. The hero should first demonstrate himself to be a brave warrior before he can achieve immortality.

MABINOGION In another Celtic story, the mixing vessel belongs to Keridwen, the main goddess from the story cycle of the Mabinogion, a collective term for a number of mediaeval texts from Wales. Keridwen shows much similarity with the gnostic Sophia, the primordial mother. She is the spouse of Hu-Gadarn, the Light, the sun, but she is separated from him. We see her as a field, as primordial nature, and also as an energy field. She is nature that gives birth to all forms, so that they may change and be transformed!
In her mixing vessel, Keridwen brews a mixture of pure wisdom and knowledge that must cook for a year and a day. Gwion Bach (Taliesin) has the task of stirring the mixture, but three drops land on his fingers. When he puts his burnt fingers into his mouth, he sud-

THE ANCIENT LEGENDS OF THE GRAIL IN CELTIC TRADITION

All experiences of the person Gwion are concentrated in the grain of seed that Keridwen, primordial nature, assimilates again. And Gwion is reborn in the new man Taliesin – the singer of the Light. It is through his courage that Taliesin is able to restore the link with

The stones of the Ring of Brodgar on the Orkneys are the remnants of a complex, where purportedly the sages and astronomers were occupied with studying the cosmos and performing related magical ceremonies. A network of 'low roads', linking the Neolithic, holy places, was spread all over England and Britain. © Marco Francino

To the Celts, light places in forests, that is, places where the light played through the trees, had a spiritual meaning. Every tree or plant, too, has its own effect and meaning. For instance, the birch tree is dedicated to Bergha or Brigit, goddess of the word and of poetry. The druids worshipped her as the goddess of rebirth; from her, they received the power of foretelling and of healing. The artisans worshipped her as the goddess of forging.

A new inner, etheric meaning of the Grail spreads its Light, and informs us about new times that are approaching

set with jewels and pearls, from Pen Annwn, the ruler of the underworld. The mixing vessel is the mysterious source of wisdom and knowledge that is guarded and kept warm by nine maidens. Only seven men from the original group return, although the poem does not tell how the others died. In no uncertain terms, it makes short work of the ignorant 'small people' and monks, who do not understand anything of the wisdom and knowledge that the bard, unmistakably one of the seven survivors, proclaims.

When a warrior gives and sacrifices himself with all his natural powers, the transformation into the inner human being in Christ, into the holder of the Grail cup, takes place within him. The end of this poem of barely sixty lines about Preiddeu Annwfn relates:

'As a group of beaten wolves,
monks crowd together
after a struggle with those who know.
They know nothing,
nothing of the dawn that follows the dark night.
Nothing of world's course,
or of the raging power
of the storm that strikes the land.
The tomb of the holy one is deeply buried in the soil.
I praise the Most High, prince of lofty abode:
May sadness depart from me; Christ is my reward.'

Nowadays, wisdom is no longer granted to mediators between gods and men, like it was in the past granted to religious authorities or kings. The person who dauntlessly fights the counterforces within himself with the light of Hu-Gadarn, will gain wisdom. Nine is the number of humanity. Every human being is able to drink from this Grail cup, because in a symbolic sense, he himself inwardly bears the mixing vessel.

With its symbolic language, the world of the Celts shows itself as a cruel and harsh world, in which the courageous warrior often falls on the field of honour. However, although the divine world becomes ever harder to access during his dangerous passages and 'the twilight of the gods' is in full swing, a light dawns on the distant horizon that makes him surmise something of a new dawn. The hero discerns a new Light; the ancient symbols regain their lustre and point the warrior, who sacrifices himself, to the ultimate victory – not only over death, but also over ancient nature religion.
The magical atmosphere of this rich tradition of Irish stories of the mixing vessel of rebirth, the source of eternal youth, does seem remote and of another time, another period of humanity. However, a new inner, etheric meaning of the Grail spreads its Light, and informs us about new times of soul development that are approaching. ✪

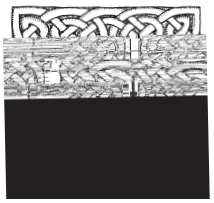
the poet's irish heart of **w.b. yeats**

In Eire, as he himself often called his beloved fatherland, the country whose 'ancient ways' he honoured, W.B. Yeats is called the father of all singers. Many modern authors and artists from this country of the art of singing and music still feel indebted to him. If ever a poet was a seeker, it was William Butler Yeats.

No poet has ever sung about Ireland and its Irish soul as lyrically as Yeats has done. In this context, we perhaps overlook the fact that the tranquillity, emanating from the Irish landscape, is also reflected in his work as the inner peace that he seeks in his tormented heart. With his immortal poems, he is always able to move the heart of the many readers who, like him, are seeking an original fatherland.

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) was not destined to become a poet but, just like his father and grandfather, a minister in the Church of Ireland (the Irish-Anglican church). However, he did not choose theology, but rather began by studying law and the fine arts, after which he soon turned to poetry as his main activity. This was partly influenced by the Irish painter G.W. Russell (1867-1935), who was able to perceive elves and spirits in the mysterious

The Irish name of the stone circle 'Grange Lough Gur' in the county of Limerick means 'Stones of the Sun'. With a diameter of 50 meters and 113 stones, it is one of the largest and most impressive stone circles in Ireland, erected around 2000 BC. The largest stone, Ronnach Croim Duibh, has a height of 4 meters and weighs 40 tons! The structure of the circle is such that on the morning of the summer solstice, 21 June, the sun shines exactly on the centre of the circle.



Irish landscape. Particularly in his early work, Yeats was strongly guided by his love for Irish folk traditions and by the nationalistic struggle for freedom.

THE RED ROSE In his work, the image of the red rose has a dual meaning, often referring to Ireland and the imperishable perfection of his 'happy townland', but often, also representing the pure love for the unattainable dream woman. In addition and in a more hidden way, 'the most secret and inviolate rose' refers to the spiritual aspiration that increasingly drove him.

This quest not only speaks from his poems, but in 1885, Yeats founded the Dublin Hermetic Society. In this period, he also met H.P. Blavatsky in London, who acquainted him with esoteric symbolism. For a short time, from 1888-1890, he was even a member of the

© MARTIN KELY

esoteric section of the Theosophical Society. Later, together with his soul mate Maud Gonne, he joined the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. This is a Rosicrucian society with a main temple in London, in which, apart from its founder MacGregor Mathers, the historian A.E. Waite was also a member. The latter chronicled the whole history of the Rosycross and Freemasonry, but he became particularly renowned by the tarot cards, named after him.

Together with Maud, Yeats wrote quite a few initiation rituals for this group and for years, he remained a loyal member. This background can be clearly traced in the rich imagery of his poetry. In many places, the influence of the writings of Emmanuel Swedenborg, Jakob Boehme and, the not to be forgotten works of William Blake, also resound in his lyrics. In this way, Yeats courageously rowed against the dominant, materialistic tide, which he considered a form of mere ignorance. He himself firmly believed in the immortality of the soul. Nevertheless, this belief sometimes also led him onto slippery paths. It was also the cause of many failed ambitions and of a generally not very easy life. Thus it is hard for us to understand that he attempted to analyse the visions of his spouse who, as a kind of psychic, recorded messages from yonder side via automatic writing. In The Vision, he constructed a complete esoteric system on this basis, in which he described huge, spiral cycles through which history alternately balances between what is objective and what is subjective. Above this temporality, the spiritual self is to be found, the 'inviolate spark of divinity, which stays separated from all incarnations', in other words, the undamaged spark of what is divine and is wholly free from everything material. In this work, we also find a large number of references to the mythology of Ireland, with which Yeats was quite familiar through his many studies, and which he further elaborated in his Fairy and Folk Tales and The Celtic Twilight. In the meantime, it had become clear that his horizon extended much further than Ireland and Celtic culture. Thus, he published, together with the Indian Sri Purohit Swami, a still very much appreciated translation of the Upanishads.

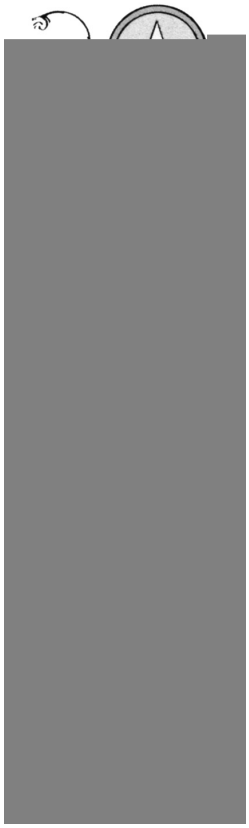
A LABOURING WORLD Yeats suffered severely from the volatility and transience of life in what he experienced as 'a labouring world'. He was weighed down by the many worries that social and political life as well as his personal love life involved. Daily life was depicted with its 'heavy mortal hope', which does not offer much more perspective than old age filled with regret and homesickness. It is a theme that ever more frequently appears with the poet's aging, as does the homesickness for lost innocence. In him, the notion of the uselessness of things and the futility of human striving increased.
His brief appointment as a senator in parliament and the award of the Nobel Prize did not change this a great deal. Being conscious of the fact that he no longer had meaning, despite all his wisdom, made him feel caught in a web of worries. 'But now I have grown nothing, knowing all. Ah Druid, how great the webs of sorrow,' Fergus sighs in his conversation with a druid. His disappointment in love inspired Yeats to the golden advice: 'Never give all the heart.' In addition, in quite a number of his poems, he mocked the sham erudition of 'the old, learned, respectable bald heads', although he said pityingly about the scholars that they, respectable and old and with all their erudition, are not aware of any evil.

Sword
air
spring
yellow
Arthur
east

Paten
earth
winter
green
Gawain
north

Grail
water
fall
blue
Parcival
west

Spear
fire
summer
red
Amfortas
south

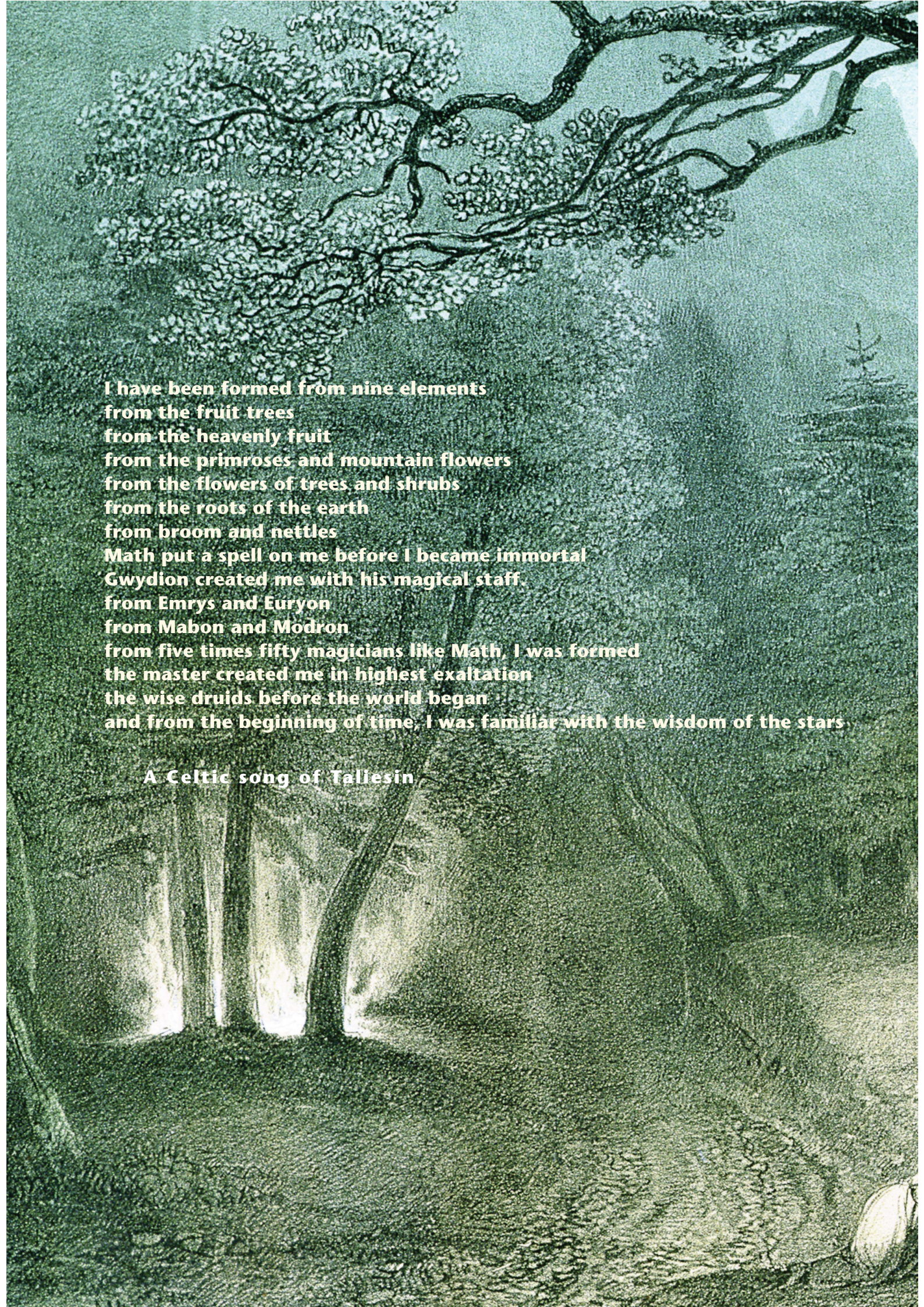


The four pictures on the left are known as The four blessings of the 'Túatha' or 'the people of the goddess Danu', a mythological, Irish people. Their history is recorded in the Irish manuscript 'The Book of Leinster' from around 1150. Yeats was the first one to relate these pictures to the four aces of the Tarot.

the flight of a falcon threatens to lead it ever further beyond the range of the falconer. It is Yeats' image of anarchy, by which a world perishes that is no longer able to find the centre, because if there is no centre, ultimately everything collapses. However, the poem's second verse offers the perspective of a return, a rebirth, a hope awakened by the age-old image of the sphinx:

Somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun.

During twenty centuries of petrified sleep, this sun has become darkened. And even now, the result is not yet clear! It is still a question whether the almost lost hope can be fulfilled in this time of the end, now that simultaneously the time comes that the monstrous animal crawls towards Bethlehem to be born. In this way, Yeats evokes the apocalyptic, final struggle between the lamb and the beast from the abyss.
Regardless of the sweet memory of the old Ireland of his youth that continued to live in him, Yeats was unable to shake off the reality of war and conflict, which not only strongly afflicted his country, but also his own life. However, he continued to believe in eternal peace, born from temporary struggle. 'Through the fire to the Light', 'Per ignem ad lucem', was the aphorism he chose upon his initiation into the Order of the Golden Dawn. ✪



I have been formed from nine elements
from the fruit trees
from the heavenly fruit
from the primroses and mountain flowers
from the flowers of trees and shrubs
from the roots of the earth
from broom and nettles
Math put a spell on me before I became immortal
Gwydion created me with his magical staff.
from Emrys and Euryon
from Mabon and Modron
from five times fifty magicians like Math, I was formed
the master created me in highest exaltation
the wise druids before the world began
and from the beginning of time, I was familiar with the wisdom of the stars

A Celtic song of Taliesin